

Town of Northfield Planning Board Site Plan Review/Special Permit

Pine Meadow Road Solar Array A



BEACON
INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS

May 20, 2021

Overview

❖ Parcel Information:

- Map 54, Lot B7 – Book 6981, Page 97*
- Map 53, Lot E1 – Book 6479, Page 201*

❖ Applicant Information:

- Property Owner: Hopping Ahead LLC and Bonnie Tucker L'Etoile and Eugene L'Etoile*
- Project Owner: BWC Pine Meadow Brook LLC, wholly-owned special purpose entity of BlueWave Project Development, LLC.*
- Long-term Solar Owner/Operator: To be determined. Project will be sold post COD.*
- Construction Contractor: To be determined.*
- Long-term Farm Operator: Finicky Farm*

❖ Project Summary:

- Project Information:*
 - ◆ ~6 megawatts DC, ~3 megawatts AC
 - ◆ 3-megawatt energy storage, DC coupled
 - ◆ Single access trackers
 - ◆ Estimated 14,456 solar modules, central inverters, energy storage (lithium-ion battery)
 - ◆ Leased area is approximately 41.3 acres, across two parcels



Property Restrictions

❖ **Agricultural Restrictions:**

- ❑ *Applicant provided documentation of the recorded release of the parcel from the Agricultural Covenant under Chapter 61A protections.*

❖ **Natural and Historic Considerations:**

- ❑ *Applicant has entered into an agreement with the Atowi Project as of April 8, 2021, to serve as a consultant to advise on matters relating to cultural resource considerations. The engagement is effective from survey and site investigation through project construction.*
- ❑ *Applicant has collaborated with the Northfield Historical Commission and has agreed to engage an archaeologist to prepare all documents, required studies and sampling in connection with the filling with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (“MHC”).*
- ❑ *Applicant will submit a project notification form (“PNF”) to the MHC and will be conducting Phase 1A and 1B archaeological studies. Applicant will collaborate with the Northfield Historical Commission (“NHC”) and seek approval from the Planning Board if the studies require changes to the project approved under the Special Permit. The archaeologist will also serve as an advisor on an as needed basis.*
- ❑ *Applicant has confirmed it will comply with the Northfield Archaeology Accountability Policy.*

Siting Considerations

❖ Setback Requirements and Encroachment:

- ❑ *The majority of the 18-foot gravel access road and security fencing on the northwestern and western portions of the parcels are sited within the 100-foot setback restriction.*
- ❑ *The majority of the 18-foot gravel access road and security fencing on portions of the southern portion of the parcels is sited within the 100-foot setback restriction.*
- ❑ *Three of the four 20-foot-wide access gates are located on/near the 100-foot setback line, and the fourth within the 100-foot setback restriction.*

❖ Landscape and Visibility Impacts:

- ❑ *Isolated vegetative screening has been proposed at the main entrance to Array A and parallel to Pine Meadow Road in the north-western portion of parcel Map 53, Lot E1.*
- ❑ *The proposed vegetative screening includes 7 to 8-foot eastern red cedar junipers (*Juniperus Virginiana*). No further vegetative screening for Array A has been proposed.*

❖ Stormwater Management Considerations:

- ❑ *Applicant will install along the gravel access road an infiltration trench two-feet wide by one-foot deep filled with crushed stone. The trench is designed to capture and diffuse stormwater runoff from the gravel access road to the surrounding areas.*

Utility Interconnection

❖ Location and Conceptual Design:

□ *Applicant has proposed four options for the Planning Board's consideration including:*

- ◆ Original Design: Submitted 12/28/20. Underground conduit from the concrete equipment pad under the gravel access road, through a heavily wooded and sloped berm to Pine Meadow Road. Four new utility poles to be sited on Pine Meadow Road with aboveground wiring.
- ◆ Revised Design: Submitted 3/8/2021. Four new utility poles and overhead wiring at the site main entrance across from 678 Pine Meadow Road. All electrical infrastructure would not be screened by vegetation.
- ◆ Alternative 1 Design: Submitted 4/13/2021. Newly installed gravel access road intersecting at the curve of Pine Meadow Road. Access road construction will require tree removal and grading. Four new utility poles to be placed along the new access road. The access road will be 18-feet wide plus an additional 6-feet to accommodate Eversource's continued access to their pole. The access road entrance will be 24-feet.
- ◆ Alternative 2 Design: Submitted 4/13/2021. Four new utility poles and overhead wiring located between equipment pad and site main entrance on Pine Meadow Road. An underground conduit would be run under the vegetative berm and Pine Meadow Road and a riser pole would be added. This option requires more permitting work for Eversource.

Surety and Property Tax:

❖ Decommissioning Assurance Obligations:

- *Applicant has offered to provide a decommissioning assurance amount which Beacon believes undervalues the effort to decommission the system. Decommissioning assurance is a surety instrument for the Town to draw upon if at any time during the life of the project the Town requires the project to be removed and the property restored, and the project owner defaults on that requirement.*

❖ Property Tax:

- *M.G.L. Ch. 61A: Pursuant to Section 13, the release from the Agricultural Covenant obligates the property owner to pay the Town roll-back real property taxes. The Town's Assessor should engage with the property owner and the Applicant to determine the real property tax liability and timing of payment.*
- *Payment in Lieu of Taxes ("PILOT") for Solar Assets: M.G.L. Ch. 8, Section 61 enables the Town and the project owner to enter into a PILOT for the solar personal property assets. A long-term PILOT agreement will exempt the solar assets from personal property taxation. The Town's Assessor should engage with the Applicant to determine whether a PILOT is appropriate.*

Beacon Recommendations

Special Permit Conditions

- ❖ Applicant must provide timely notice to the Town of any assignment, transfer or sale of BWC Pine Meadow Brook LLC.
- ❖ Applicant must work with the Atowi Project during design and construction and engage an archaeologist to support the filing requirements with MHC and provide guidance to NHC.
- ❖ Applicant must seek Planning Board approval for any material changes to the Project, including but not limited to capacity, location, area, equipment height, equipment changes impacting noise or contaminants and ground disturbance, and must provide to the Planning Board final construction design documents stamped by a MA licensed professional engineer prior to applying for the Building Permit.
- ❖ Applicant must seek Planning Board approval for any material changes to the utility interconnection design and construction plan as approved in the Special Permit, including location, material disturbance of vegetation, pole placement, overhead wiring and underground conduits.



Beacon Recommendations

Special Permit Conditions

- ❖ Applicant must notify and provide all required identification information to the Planning Board of the selected Engineering, Procurement and Construction (“EPC”) it selects to construct the Project.
- ❖ Applicant must install the proposed 7 to 8-foot vegetative screening at the main entrance and warranty the health of the vegetation over the life of the Project.
- ❖ Applicant must document annually at a prescribed period the continued agricultural use of the property by providing a copy of the Annual Reports filed with the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture and Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources as required under the Commonwealth’s SMART Program.
- ❖ Applicant must provide year-round access to the equipment pads and demonstrate annually compliance with its Post Construction Stormwater Operation and Maintenance Plan as provided in its revised submission dated April 13, 2021.
- ❖ Applicant must document that decommissioning obligations of the Applicant are addressed between the Property Owner and the Applicant.
- ❖ Applicant must provide decommissioning surety in an amount and form acceptable to the Town.



Beacon Recommendations

Special Permit Conditions

- ❖ Prior to Commercial Operation, Applicant must provide safety and emergency training for Town staff, public safety and first responder personnel.
- ❖ Applicant must provide support to Town Department of Public Works for cleaning out catch basins on Pine Meadow Road in the vicinity of the Project in advance of construction and monitor catch basins annually as part of its annual Post Construction Stormwater Operation and Maintenance Plan.
- ❖ In connection with receiving Certificate of Occupancy from the Building Inspector, Applicant must provide:
 - As-Built documentation stamped by a MA licensed engineer*
 - Safety manuals and emergency protocols*
 - Documentation from the Northfield Fire Department approving fire suppression systems and emergency protocols*
 - Proof of insurance in amounts as required by the Town*
 - Decommissioning assurance to the Town in amounts and form agreeable to the Town*

Site Plan Review/Special Permit

General Compliance Overview

- ❖ Beacon notes that the submission of the original application, follow-on information, documentation and willingness to work with the Atowi Project and the Northfield Historical Commission meets the intent of the Zoning Bylaw and requirements of the Site Plan Review except for the following:
 - Identification of the long-term owner/operator*
 - Identification of the construction contractor*
 - Encroachment on the 100-foot property boundary setback restriction*
 - Provision of safety manuals and emergency protocols*
 - Determination and finalization of utility interconnection design and location*

- ❖ Beacon has offered various Conditions for consideration, which in our professional opinion clarifies the intent, design and long-term operations of the Project. Further, several of the proposed Conditions provide improved documentation and protections for the Town over the life of the Project.

Thank You!

Beacon Integrated Solutions

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